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THE MEDINA COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION ASSOCIATION
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Heritage
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April 30, 2003

FD 34284

Ms. Jaya Zyman-Ponebshek
URS Corporation
P.O. Box 201088
Austin, Texas 78720-1088

Dear Ms. Zyman-Ponebshek,

Ms. Rini Ghosh of the Surface Transportation Board has advised me that the URS Corporation has been selected to do the required environmental studies for a proposed railroad spur for the Southwest Gulf Railroad Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Vulcan Materials Company. It is my understanding through telephone contacts with your office that public input in the form of written concerns is appreciated by URS, and that these comments and concerns can be addressed in the environmental study being currently performed.

I am writing in behalf of a group of concerned citizens of about 120 families living in Medina County, Texas in the Quihi area. In February of 2000 we formed the Medina County Environmental Action Association in an effort to protect our homes, health, and heritage, which we believe will be threatened by the opening of yet another quarry and railroad in our area.

According to a map that we received from the Surface Transportation Board, parts of the proposed, as well as the alternative railroad routes cross portions of the flood plains of the Quihi, Elm, and Cherry Creeks. Having lived in Medina County for over thirty years and in my present location for almost twenty years, we have experienced extensive flooding on three separate occasions in the above-mentioned flood plains. The building of a railroad spur crossing the Quihi Creek as depicted by the proposed route and by alternative routes 1 and 2 would traverse a flood plain approximately 2000 feet in width at the point the railroad crosses County Road 365, according to FEMA Flood Plain maps. Alternative route 3 carries the same risks, but crosses the Quihi and Elm Creeks at a different location. In addition, the proposed route and alternative route 3 cross the Cherry Creek, which is not marked on the map. Any type of supporting berm or truss for a rail line would impound floodwaters during times of heavy rain of four to six inches. Ten-inch rains have even occurred several times in the past fifteen years. Tremendous amounts of debris are caused by these floodwaters. Any blockage of the creek can lead to serious flooding above the blockage. Of even more concern is what would happen should a berm or truss give way. Prior to my knowledge of your involvement with this project, I sent a letter with fifty-four (54) cosigners to the Corps of Engineers in Fort Worth expressing our concerns in this regard and stating our opposition to building a railroad crossing supported by a berm or truss. We believe that the only safe railroad crossing would be accomplished by a railroad supported by bridges that would withstand the flooding and allow the unobstructed passage of water.

In addition to the families and individuals living in the affected flood plains, there are twenty-four (24) historic houses built in the late 1840s and early 1850s around the Quihi Creek and Quihi Lake. There are also two historic churches, two cemeteries, one historic school, one historic trail (General Wool or Woll's Road), a gas pipeline pumping station, two pipelines, and the Quihi Gun Club, all of which are either in the flood plains of the Quihi and Elm Creeks or would be crossed by the proposed railroad spur. At least four of the historic Alsatian houses are located within a short distance of fifty yards or less of the proposed railroad line. These structures would be threatened not only by flooding, but also by the vibration of the heavy locomotive engines and cars that would pass nearby. These structures are frail and would be adversely affected by vibration.

Other environmental concerns associated with a one-mile long railroad train of cars are the dust and noise they produce. The proposed gondola cars are not covered and there is no preventative for the dispersion of dust particles along the seven-mile spur, nor the two hundred and fifty (250) mile route along the existing Union Pacific rail line to Houston, which is the proposed destination for ninety percent of the material. Medina County already has eight gravel quarries and there are many quarries in nearby Bexar County. As you are probably aware, Bexar and surrounding counties in Texas already have air quality problems. It is our feeling that the additional particulate matter from the open railroad cars will only make matters worse by contributing to the air pollution and will also increase the health risks to those living near the railroads between the quarry site and Houston.

We would also like you to consider Vulcan Material Company's statements of need and justification for this railroad. It should be noted that permission for a railroad spur in West County has been recently granted to the Martin Marietta Company. This permit was granted so that the company could better serve the Dallas-Ft. Worth area. In addition, Martin Marietta stated that permitting the building of the two and a half-mile spur would allow them to serve the Houston area by connecting with existing rail lines. So I presume this market is being filled.

Still other concerns deal with unavoidable delays caused by grade level crossings proposed for the crossing of at least five county roads. Should people in the area going to work, needing police, EMS, or the Fire Department suffer because a slow mile-long train is blocking the road four times every day? The people in this area don't believe so. We have discussed this matter with our County Commissioner and County Judge and they are with us. Again the solution is to build grade separation for the traffic where the rail line will exist. This has been the solution called for by the Texas Department of Transportation for FM 2676 and it should be the same for the county roads as well. Please see the enclosed letter from our local Texas Department of Transportation engineers to their Austin office.

In conclusion, our organization appreciates the opportunity to make known our concerns about this project. We hope that you will give due consideration to our suggestions concerning the safe management of flood plain dangers, noise and air pollution, and the problems with traffic management this project will surely cause. Thank you for your time devoted to this lengthy letter. We will await your reply and look forward to having further public input when your preliminary report is done.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Fitzgerald".

Robert Fitzgerald
President, Medina County Environmental Association

Enclosures –Letter and Pictures

xc: Rini Ghosh

County Judge Jim Barden

U.S. Representative Henry Bonilla

From: Carl Friesenhahn
 To: Clay SMITH; Judith FRIESENHAHN; Julia BROWN
 Date: 2/10/00 4:13PM
 Subject: New Vulcan Quarry in Medina County

I wanted to make everyone aware of a situation that is developing in Medina County that involves the establishment of a new quarry by Vulcan Materials. The proposed 2,000 acre quarry would be located northeast of Quilhi approximately 8 miles north of US 90 (Dunlay) and approximately 3 miles north of FM 2676.

Tom Ransdell, President of Vulcan Materials Company (Southwest Division) visited with me earlier today to brief me on the company's plans. Vulcan is proposing to construct a 6 mile long railroad spur that would transport the material from the pit to the Union Pacific Railroad track that runs adjacent to US 90 on the north side. They agreed that a grade separation needs to be constructed where the spur crosses FM 2676 and they understand that the cost of this would be theirs.

They are also interested in constructing a new roadway or improving existing county roads to provide a direct connection from the quarry to US 90. They seemed to be asking for our assistance (funding) to do this. I explained that although such a roadway would connect two of our roadways (US 90 and FM 2676), I didn't anticipate that we would contribute to this due to the minimal amount of benefit that it would provide to the traveling public as a whole (500 ADT on FM 2676 based on the 98 Traffic Map).

I also explained to Tom that any funding agreement for TxDOT to build a grade separation bridge or to build a roadway back to US 90, would have to be handled through Medina County. Tom said that they would get with the County and discuss this matter and probably try to set up a meeting between all three of us to discuss the options and come up with a strategy for moving forward on this.

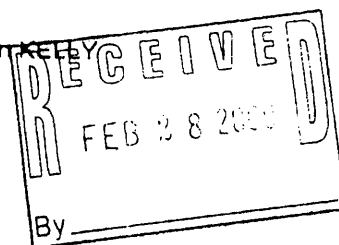
One last tidbit, there is a group of local citizens that have formed to fight the project calling themselves the Medina County Environmental Action League. Approximately 200 area residents met last Thursday in Quilhi with Vulcan representatives to discuss their concerns. Among many items, they are concerned with noise, dust, contamination of water supply and reduction of property values. I will forward everyone a copy of the front page article from today's Hondo Anvil Herald concerning this subject.

If anyone has questions about this matter or feels that I have provided incorrect information to Vulcan, please let me know. I will keep everyone apprised of any new developments.

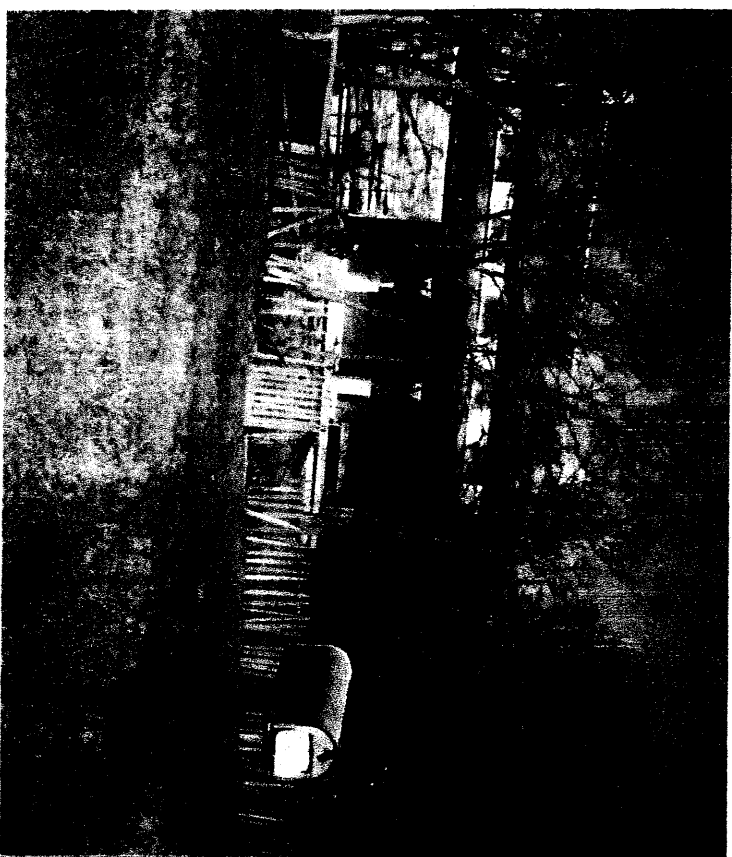
Carl

CC: Antonio Arredondo III; Dale Holzhaus; Gregory Biediger; John KELLY

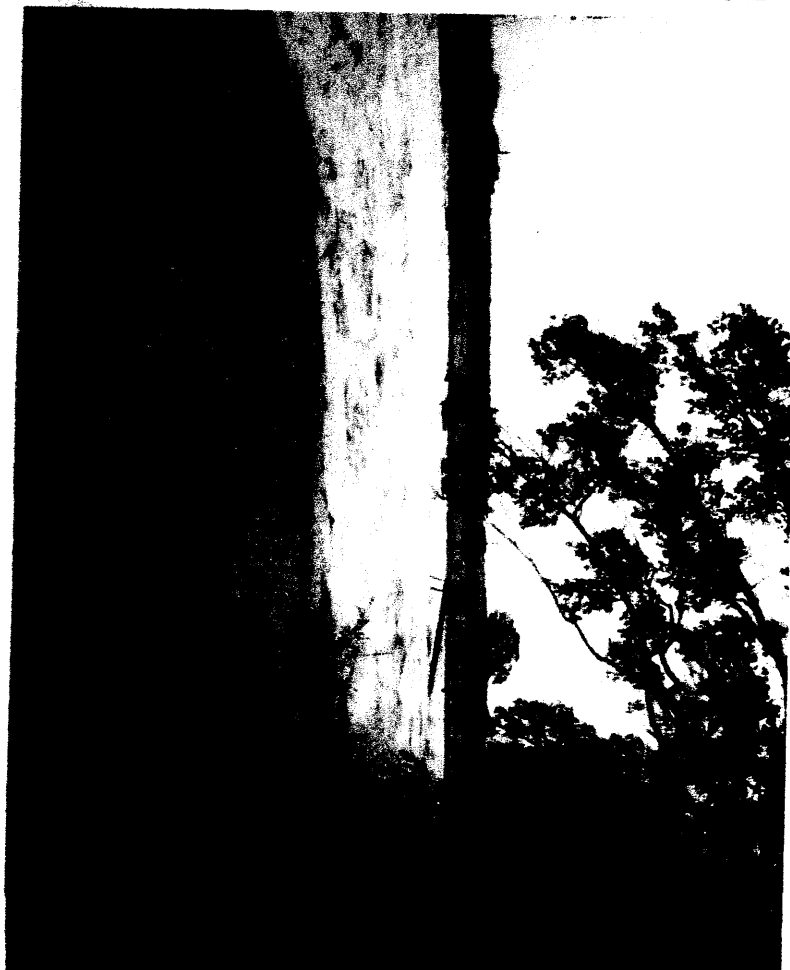
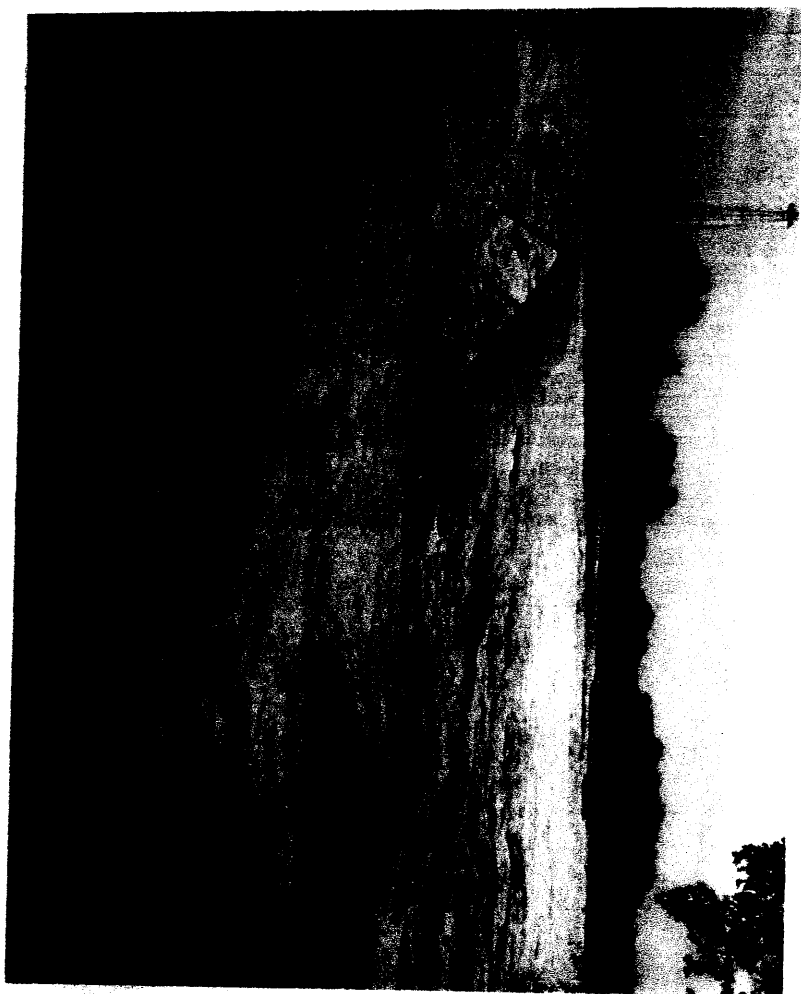
FEB 28 2000		Post-It® Fax Note		7671	Date 2/28/00	# of pages 1
By	Judge Montgomery	To	Carl Friesenhahn			
	Medina Co.	Co./Dept.	TxDOT			
		Phone #				
		Fax #	741-6025			



*Given to
 Alyse Fitzpatrick
 2-28-00
 [Signature]*



Several Gleason houses near proposed RR line
built in 1845-50





Top of
Creek

